

Pregnancy Rates

Annually, more than 900,000 adolescents become pregnant. The majority (78 percent) of teen pregnancies are unplanned, accounting for one-fourth of all accidental pregnancies each year (1). The consequences of unintended pregnancy for adolescents include unintended births, reduced educational attainment, fewer employment opportunities, increased likelihood of welfare, and poorer health and developmental outcomes among their infants (2). About one-fourth of unintended pregnancies end in abortion (1).

■ Teen pregnancy rates are much higher in the United States than in many other developed countries. In the mid-1990s rates were twice as high as in England and Wales or Canada, and 8 times as high as in Japan (3).

■ The number of pregnancies is estimated as the sum of live births, induced abortions, and fetal losses (miscarriages and stillbirths). In 1996 the pregnancy rate was 98.7 pregnancies per 1,000 young women 15–19 years of age. Pregnancy rates increased with age, from 2.8 for the youngest adolescents, 10–14 years of age (see Data Table), to 67.8 for adolescents 15–17 years and 146.4 for adolescents 18–19 years. A Healthy People 2010 critical adolescent objective calls for a reduction in pregnancies among female adolescents to no more than 46 pregnancies per 1,000 adolescents (4).

■ Teen pregnancy rates vary by race and Hispanic origin. In 1996 pregnancy rates were more than twice as high among non-Hispanic black and Hispanic teens as among non-Hispanic white teens. Abortion rates were higher among non-Hispanic black teens than either Hispanic or non-Hispanic white teens.

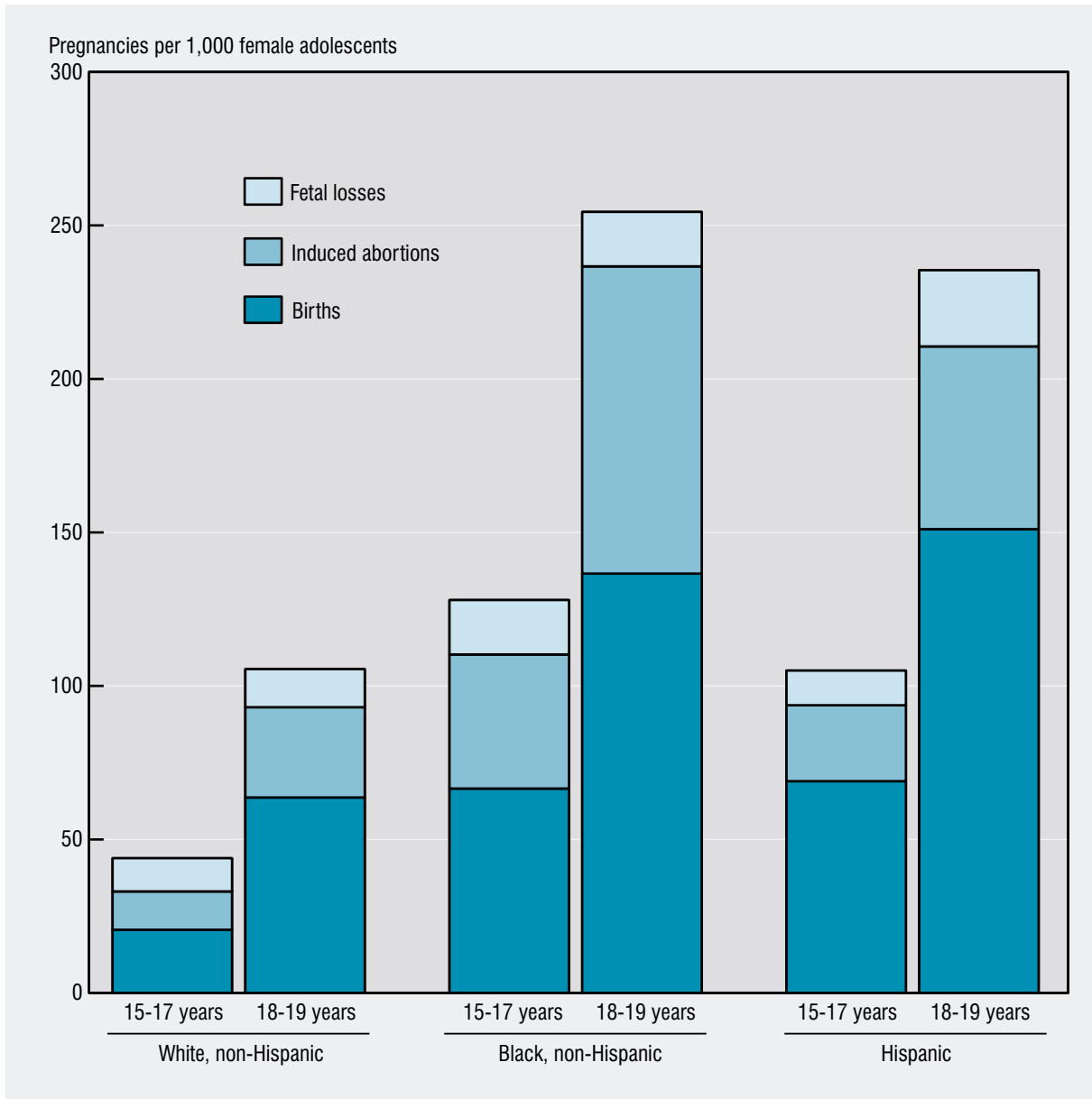
■ The teenage pregnancy rate for young women 15–19 years of age decreased 15 percent since reaching a peak of 116.5 per 1,000 in 1991 (5). Birth rates and abortion rates for adolescents declined in recent years. Fetal losses also declined as the number of young women becoming pregnant declined.

■ Between 1990 and 1995 the proportion of teenagers who ever had intercourse decreased from 55 to 50 percent (6). Moreover, contraceptive use among sexually active teens increased over those years, and contracepting teens chose more effective contraceptive methods. These factors contributed to the decrease in pregnancy rates among teenagers.

References

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5. Ventura ST, Mosher WD, Curtin SC, Abma JC, Henshaw SK. Trends in pregnancies and pregnancy rates by outcome: Estimates for the United States, 1976–96. *Vital Health Stat* 21(56). National Center for Health Statistics. 2000.
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Figure 19. Pregnancy rates according to outcome of pregnancy among adolescents 15–19 years of age, by age, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1996



NOTES: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. See Technical Notes for discussion of pregnancy rate estimation. See Data Table for data points graphed.

SOURCE: Ventura SJ, Mosher WD, Curtin SC, Abma JC, Henshaw SK. Trends in pregnancies and pregnancy rates by outcome: Estimates for the United States, 1976–96. *Vital Health Stat* 21(56). Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2000. See related *Health, United States, 2000*, tables 3, 8, 16, and 17.